

RE: [HB 7192 - AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFICIENCIES](#)

Dear Co-Chairs Senator McCarthy Vahey and Representative Cassano, Ranking Members Champagne and Zawistowski, Vice Chairs Baker and Bradley, and members of the Planning and Development Committee.

I am opposed to HB 7192, sections 7-10.

I object to forced or coerced regionalization of schools. There is no evidence this will produce a more efficient school system or result in any cost savings or improve our education system. It will likely increase the cost of education.

Section 7 establishes “a Commission on Shared School Services for the purpose of developing a **plan** for the **redistricting** or **consolidation** of school services and school districts.” (Line 444-447). This Commission is given the mandate to redistrict or consolidate school services AND school districts. "Redistricting" and "Consolidating" are repeated throughout sections 7 - 10. Any data collection or study is not done objectively, the entire process is already biased, and the decision to consolidate is based on this pre-determined mandate.

The Commission consists of 14 members who are all appointed by the Leaders of the Legislature and the Governor (Line 450-477) and will exist for eight years until June 30, 2027 (Line 492). The fate of 169 school districts, each with their own elected municipal leaders, boards of education and legislative representatives that may change over these years, should not rest with this small commission. Most of these school districts are doing a good job of providing an education in a cost-sensitive manner to our children. While some changes need to be made to benefit some of our students, this approach puts the entire system at risk.

Connecticut towns like ours in Wilton have spent many years refining their education systems to optimize the dollars spent for the benefit and needs of our students. Wilton has implemented efficiencies like having a central shared elementary school that is cost effective, has a reasonable bussing service for a town of our geographic size, provides for an equal opportunity for all students and fosters a sense of community amongst all students. This is a solution that works for Wilton. Other towns may have other priorities and solutions that work well for them.

After reviewing articles written, and talking to concerned residents recently about efforts they are aware of in their towns to pursue some voluntary coordination efforts, it is clear that the concept of voluntary regionalization and shared services sharing is alive and well (for towns large and small) and could be nurtured where appropriate. Here are a few examples, but these are just a few of many that exist across the state:

- Our First Selectwoman cites this and many examples of voluntary sharing in this article: ["Vanderslice Finds New Threats in Gov.'s Regionalization Bill..."](#), Lynne Vanderslice, First Selectwoman of Wilton, February 26, 2019, [Good Morning Wilton.](#)
- The First Selectman of Easton, Adam Dunsby, also shares examples in [The NewsTimes, February 8, 2019, "Letter to the editor: Regionalization already happens"](#)

Improving quality of education is not mentioned in any of the recent bills that address forced regionalization and should be the identified problem and goal of any bill targeting changes in education. Many of our schools are doing well, and while there are always areas for improvement, it is not a system to throw out and replace.

Michelle Haggerty

Wilton, CT